

News Release

N.P.R. Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUBLIC MEETING CHANGES TO REFUGE ENTRANCE FEES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is hosting a Public Meeting and accepting public comments on the proposed changes to the Recreational Pass fee structure at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee and Nathaniel P. Reed Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuges.

The meetings will take place on February 19, 2019 at A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR and February 20, 2019 at N.P.R. Hobe Sound NWR. Both meetings will begin at 10am. The A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR meeting will be held in the Visitor Center located at 10216 Lee Road, Boynton Beach, FL 33473. The N.P.R. Hobe Sound NWR meeting will be held in the Visitor Center located at 13640 SE Federal Hwy, Hobe Sound, FL 33455.

The Recreational Passes at these two Refuges have remained the same for over two decades. At both Refuges, the Annual Pass will be increased from \$12 to \$25 for 12 months of access and the \$1 Daily Pedestrian/Bicycle Recreation fee will be removed allowing free daily access for public that is either walking or bicycling onto the Refuge. A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge will also increase daily vehicle Recreation Passes from \$5 to \$10 and the N.P.R. Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge will remain at \$5 for daily vehicle access.

Since 1981, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had authority to collect recreation fees. Since 1997, the Service has been able to retain fees collected at the station, first under the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and then, in 2004, under the authority of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). The Refuges currently retain nearly 100% of fees collected which are used for recreation program improvements at the Refuge. Typical projects paid for by recreation fee funds include education programming, road and parking lot maintenance, brochures, passes and envelopes, trail improvements, interpretive signage and boardwalk maintenance.

We are interested in hearing from you regarding the proposed Recreation Fee changes and are requesting public comments beginning now through March 31, 2019. Please submit any comments to armloxahatchee@fws.gov or by mail to 10216 Lee Road, Boynton Beach, FL 33473, ATTN: Rec Fees. Comments will also be accepted during the Public Meetings. All comments will be reviewed and considered before a final decision is made on the implementation of the fee changes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to these meetings for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, close captioning, or other accommodation needs to Serena Rinker, Park Ranger (serena_rinker@fws.gov, 561-735-6029), TTY 800-877-8339 by close of business February 12, 2019.

The table below represents the proposed fee changes:

| <i>Refuge</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Current</i> | <i>Proposed</i> |
|---|--|----------------|-----------------|
| A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge | Daily Vehicle Recreation Pass | \$5.00 | \$10.00 |
| A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge | Annual Recreation Pass | \$12.00 | \$25.00 |
| A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge | Daily Pedestrian/Bicycle Recreation Pass | \$1.00 | FREE |
| N.P.R. Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge | Daily Recreation Pass | \$5.00 | No Change |
| N.P.R. Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge | Annual Vehicle Recreation Pass | \$12.00 | \$25.00 |
| N.P.R. Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge | Daily Pedestrian/Bicycle Recreation Pass | FREE | No Change |

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HobeSoundNWR/. For more information about the Refuge visit: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/hobe_sound/

